

بسم الله الرَّحْمَانِ الرَّحِيمِ وَالْحَمْدُ لِلَّهِ رَبِّ الْعَالَمِينَ وَ الصَّلَاةُ وَالسَّلَامُ عَلَى سَيِّدِ الْأَنْبِيَاءِ وَالْمُرْسَلِينَ

The Buddhas of Bamyan:

Refuting those who Call for the Preservation of Idols in the Name of Islam

By Abu Abdallah Shibli Zaman

INTRODUCTION

When I first received an email presenting this argument that the Buddha statues were to be preserved¹ it was entitled:

"Fikh view on the demolition of the Buddha statues"

In Arabic, "Jurisprudence" is "*Fiqh*" (فقه), whereas, "*Fikh*" or "*Fakh*" (فخ) is a "trap" or "snare". I found this error most appropriate as a sad bulk of the Occidentalists Muslims² have fallen into the trap of pleasing the *kuffaar*³ by condemning an action which was espoused by both Prophets Abraham and Muhammad *al-Maahidee* (صلى الله عليه وآله وسلم). I found it odd that the word "*fiqh*" was even used throughout in spite of their arguments failing to produce any references from the Qur'an, the Sunnah, the Exegeses or the Four Primary Jurisprudents of the *Ahl as-Sunnah*⁴.

I. THE FIQH ARGUMENT

AL-MASAALIHI AL-MURSALAH

Many have proposed that the destruction of the idols in Bamyan, Afghanistan is against the precept of "*Maṣlahah `ala Mafṣada*" (public interest over harm). "*Maṣlahati-l Mursalah*" is a deduction of benefit in the absence of any related injunction from the Qur'an or Sunnah, hence, the descriptor "*al-Mursalah*" meaning in this context "unrestrained". There are generally three types of "*Maṣlahah*".

Muhammad Habash places three conditions upon "*Maṣlahati-l Mursalah*" in his book "*Sharḥ al-Mu'tamad fee Usool al-Fiqh*":

"The commentators have stipulated the requirements for '*al-Masaalihi-l Mursalah*' into three clauses: First - It must be for the benefit of the community and not the individual. Second - It must

¹ Written by Professor Aziza al-Hibri, an open Democrat and opponent of Shari'ah. See my separate article '*Who is Aziza al-Hibri*'

² *Occidental Muslim* – A term I prefer over "Modernist", since Islam is a religion compatible for all times, and using the term "Modernism" in a negative context alludes that Islam is in some way not compatible with modern times. Thus, an *Occidental Muslim* is one who adheres to the ways of the West and makes attempts to reconcile Islam with its heretical ideologies usually by at the expense of Islam rather than giving up Western ideas and principles. The attempt to introduce Democracy, a model by far inferior to *Shari'ah*, is one such example of Muslim Occidentalism.

³ *Kuffaar* – Disbelievers (pl.)

⁴ *The Ahl as-Sunnah* ("People of the Prophetic Traditions") are Islam's overwhelming majority and orthodoxy. The Four Primary Scholars of its Jurisprudence are Imaam Abu Haneefah, Imaam Maalik, Imaam Shaafi'ee, and Imaam Ahmad bin Hanbal (رحمهم الله). Respectively their schools are called "*Hanafi*", "*Maaliki*", "*Shaafi'ee*" and "*Hanbali*". All are seen by each other as completely valid even in times of varying opinions between each.

be a tangible benefit and not an illusory one. Third - It must not conflict in its essence with anything from the *Shari`ah*⁵

When a “*Nass*” (textual evidence) is presented which contrasts any deduced “*Maslahah*” (the second example) that deduction is cancelled, null and void. This is based upon the consensus of the scholars, whether they accept *Maslahah* as a valid method or not. The Four Primary Jurisprudents in the *Ahl as-Sunnah* are divided on this issue. Muhammad Habash says, in the aforementioned book, “..The Hanafis, as well as Shaafi`ees have abandoned it (*Maslahah*).”

This is again a subject that is so deep that to write about it would take another work entirely. However, I do not need to write another paper to elucidate that “*Maslahah*” is completely inapplicable in this situation. Many of the scholars reject *Maslahah* outright in matters of *Fiqh*, especially when there is clear textual evidence against it. Here I will address the requirements of *Maslahah* which Ms. Al-Hibri chose to introduce irrelevantly:

1) "For example, the interpretation must be based on the Qur'an and Sunnah (the reported words and example of the Prophet)."

EVIDENCE: THE QUR'AN

Allah says in the Qur'an:

يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا إِنَّمَا الْخَمْرُ وَالْمَيْسِرُ وَالْأَنْصَابُ وَالْأَزْلَامُ رَجْسٌ مِّنْ عَمَلِ الشَّيْطَانِ فَاجْتَنِبُوهُ لَعَلَّكُمْ تُفْلِحُونَ

“O you who believe, intoxicants, gambling, idols (*al-Ansaab*), and divining of arrows are the filth of Shaytan's handiwork; So avoid them if you hope to be successful.”

[*al-Qur'aan, Surat al-Maa'idah, 5:90*]

About the word “*al-Ansaab*” in this verse, Imaam al-Qurtubi records in his “*Jaami` li-Ahkaam al-Qur'aan*” from Ibn `Atiyah: “...and regarding *al-Ansaab* these are idols (*asnaam*)”. There is a minority opinion supported by two companions, Ibn `Abbas and Ibn Jurayj (رضي الله عنهم), which attributes this to be specifically the altar of stone upon which sacrifices were made to the idols.

Allah also says in the Qur'an:

“..فَاجْتَنِبُوا الرِّجْسَ مِنَ الْأَوْثَانِ..” meaning “..So shun the filth of idols..” [*al-Qur'an, Surat al-Hajj, 22:30*]

EVIDENCE: THE SUNNAH

"I dispatch you with what the Messenger of Allah (صلى الله عليه وآله وسلم) dispatched me and ordered me that I should level every grave and destroy every statue"

[“أن أسوي كل قبر وأطمس كل صنم” *Musnad Imaam Ahmad*, from the Musnad of `Ali]

⁵ *Shari`ah* – Islamic Law as revealed by Allah in the Qur'an and the advent of His Last Messenger, Muhammad (صلى الله عليه وسلم). *Shari`ah* may not be changed in any way by human amendment. Such an act is considered disbelief and abandonment of Islam.

"The Messenger of Allah (صلى الله عليه وآله وسلم) deputed men from the Ansaar to level every grave and destroy every statue.."

[*"أن يسوي كل قبر وأن يطمح كل صنم"*, *Musnad Imaam Ahmad*, from the Musnad of Ali]

Upon this, Ali (عليه السلام) wished to weigh "*Maslahah*" as these people are doing against the order of the Prophet (صلى الله عليه وآله وسلم) in the following narration from Imaam Ahmad's Musnad:

"I do hate to enter the homes of my people, so send me if you come across any (idols)"

To this "*Maslahah*" approach of Ali, the Prophet (صلى الله عليه وآله وسلم) replied,

"O Ali, do not try to be comely, nor vain, and do not trade in other than trade which is good. For these (aforementioned) are the ones who procrastinate in their acts."

[*"يا علي لا تكونن فتانا ولا مختالا ولا تاجرا إلا تاجر خير فإن أولئك مسوفون في العمل"*, *Musnad Imaam Ahmad*, from the Musnad of Ali bin Abi Talib]

This should be the end of the issue, and indeed it is, but I will proceed to shatter the rest of these un-Islamic arguments further so that this argument never rears its head again.

2) "It must be based on knowledge and motivated by piety."

The indisputable and authentic evidence from the Sunnah above is enough to fulfill the requirement of the act being "based on knowledge". Now for "motivated by piety", this is something that is obvious. The Taliban had absolutely no benefit in destroying the statues as it enraged everyone on the planet. The Muslims can not unite on anything, but they united on demanding the preservation of these idols. The only One the Taliban could have possibly been trying to please was Allah. The requirement of "motivated by piety" is something evident in their actions, but in the end is not something tangible which can be proven by evidence.

3) "It must also serve (rather than harm) *maslaha* (public interest) of Muslims in particular and humanity in general."

This point of "*Maslahah*" was already refuted thoroughly above and in the refutation to her first condition regarding the Qur'an and Sunnah. There is powerful and strong "*Nass*" (textual evidence) from both the Qur'an, the Sunnah and their scholarly exegeses to nullify any such deduction. Also, the consensuses of all four Primary Jurisprudents of the Ahl as-Sunnah do not accept "*Maslaha*" in itself. Even Imaam Maalik's adherence to it is conditional upon the stipulations being in congruence with textual evidence as mentioned above.

"It is for this reason that when the Abbasid Khalifah (Caliph) Abu Ja'far al-Mansour approached Imaam Maalik with the idea of adopting the Maaliki math.hab (school of thought) as the official math.hab of the land, the Imaam rejected the idea repeatedly. Realizing that he is only a human being who is capable of error, he refused to impose his views on a whole people."

Here Ms. Al-Hibri seems to equate acceptable variance of the four schools of jurisprudence with differences in *religion*! She is using an argument which relates to forcing one “*mathhab*”⁶ over another in reference to the difference between monotheism and polytheism. All four schools of thought in the *Ahl as-Sunnah* are absolutely acceptable. However, Buddhism and Hinduism are not acceptable religions as Allah has stated: "On this day have I perfected your religion, and completed my favor to you and chosen al-Islam as your religion"⁷. Imaam Maalik did not wish to usurp the legitimacy of the other *acceptable* Islamic schools of thought for his own. However, if Imaam Maalik were asked by the Roman Emperor to make Islam the doctrine of the land no of sound mind can say he would refuse in the name of "freedom of thought". These ideas spiral into a realm far outside of and beyond Islam.

II. THE ARCHEOLOGICAL AND HISTORICAL ARGUMENT

THE SPHINX: THE CLAIM THAT MUSLIMS PRESERVED IDOLS

"For centuries, Islam has preserved and even maintained all prior cultural expressions, including the Egyptian Sphinx, the Persian Persepolis, ancient houses of worship belonging to other religions, and the pictures, images, artifacts and possessions they housed."

The "Sphinx" of Egypt was excavated as recently as the 19th century having been *completely buried several times in its history*. Buried. Completely. Even as early as the 18th Dynasty, there is evidence that Thutmosis IV necessitated clearing and excavating it. In the 1700's Napoleon's army only saw the head of the Sphinx barely peeking out of the sand⁸. As recent as 1926, the Sphinx had to be cleared and excavated yet again by Emile Baraize.

"The archaeological record confirms that Thutmosis did indeed free the Sphinx of sand. Mudbrick walls, inscribed with the name of this king, survive in remnants in the precinct. The very fact that Thutmosis built these walls suggests that Thutmosis IV excavated the Sphinx and also cleared completely the sand as Baraize did centuries later in 1926"

[“History of the Conservation of the Sphinx”, Dr. Zahi al-Hawass, Undersecretary of the State for the Giza Monuments]

"Despite a second restoration attempt during the Roman period, the Sphinx slowly became buried again. Not until 1925, when the French archeologist Emile Baraize and his workers spent 11 years clearing the area of sand, did the Sphinx finally enjoy liberation"

[“Rescuing World Monuments”, NOVA]

So you can be assured that in the 7th century AD when the Muslims arrived in Egypt, it was completely buried.

⁶ *Mathhab* – (math-hab) – School of thought. In reference to the schools established by the Four Primary Jurisprudents of the *Ahl as-Sunnah*. All four schools are not at odds with one another and all four are acceptable to one another.

⁷ الْيَوْمَ اكْمَلْتُ لَكُمْ دِينَكُمْ وَأَتِمَمْتُ عَلَيْكُمْ نِعْمَتِي وَرَضِيْتُ لَكُمُ الْإِسْلَامَ دِينًا [al-Qur’aan, Surat al-Maa’idah]

⁸ The nose was lost prior to Napoleon's invasion of Egypt, when the Muslims effaced it out of religious conviction several times between the 7th and 14th centuries, and the Mamluks disgraced it as an object of target practice in the 17th century finally shooting off its beard and nose. May Allah reward them.



The above picture was taken nearly 10 years after Baraize's clearing of the sand that had enveloped the age-old statue. Even then it was cleared only up to its next. The historical and archaeological evidence is clear that the Sphinx was completely covered by sand as recent as the 1920's. Thus, Ms. Al-Hibri and any other "defenders of treasures of humanity", she must provide a single narration from the Companions of the Prophet (صلى الله عليه وآله وسلم) regarding their seeing the Sphinx and how they dealt with it. In the Arabic tradition the Sphinx is called "Abu-l Hawl" meaning "The Father of Horror". You will scarcely if at all find it mentioned in the traditional books of Islamic jurisprudence, history and law. All are invited to verify this. The reason being that this statue was buried in sand for most of its 5000 year-old history.

DID THE EARLY MUSLIMS PRESERVE IDOLS?

Fahmi Howeidi a critic of the Taliban's destruction of the Buddhist idols in their own land states:

"... When one realizes that since the arrival of Muslims to the lands of Persia, Egypt, to their conquest of India -- and all of these lands were full of relics from temples to statues, etc -- not a single historical record shows Muslims destroying such monuments."

This is a common argument amongst the Occidentalists Muslims who have joined the chorus of disbelievers in defense of these idols which are objects of worship in partnership with Allah. This argument is deceptive and false. Today one looks at the Sphinx and thinks, indeed, the Muslims preserved this. However, this is an observation made by those who are not aware of Egyptology, Archeology and History.

"Over the centuries the Great Sphinx has suffered severely from weathering...Man has been responsible for additional mutilation. In 1380 A.D. the Sphinx fell victim to the iconoclastic ardor of a fanatical Muslim ruler, who caused deplorable injuries to the head. Then the figure was used as a target for the guns of the Mamluks."

[Encyclopedia Americana, vol 25, pages 492-3]

"There is good evidence that Khafre's bottom course of granite casing was being stripped as early as ancient Egypt's 19th Dynasty, and as early as the 12th century A.D., limestone was quarried from the Giza Pyramids for the construction of buildings in Cairo."

[“History of Giza”, NOVA]

There is also a detailed account by the chronicler Muhammad al-Husayni Taqi ad-Deen al-Maqrizi in the second volume of his book "*al-Mawaa'iz wa-l I'tibaar fee Thikr al-Khitat wa-l Athar*" that the face, specifically the nose, ears, and whatever else was visible was deemed to be demolished

due to the *fatwa* of a shaykh named Saa'im al-Dahr in the year 1378. Later in the 17th century the Mamluk Turks used what was visible of the Sphinx's face for target practice. They shot off the nose and riddled its face with holes.

Thus, there is significant evidence that Muslims in the 12th century AD were breaking away at these idols and using their stone for buildings. Ms. Al-Hibri's statements, "For centuries, Islam has preserved and even maintained all prior cultural expressions, including the Egyptian Sphinx.." is fallacious at best.

The Buddhas in Bamyan had indeed been effaced as much as possible in the early centuries of Afghan Muslim history. They had no dynamite, gunpowder, or anti-tank and aircraft missiles. They simply had pick axes, hammers and tools of manual labor. Thus, removing the faces was all they could do given their resources, and all that is required as a bare minimum by *Shari'ah*. Anyone who has visited Afghanistan, unlike Ms. Al-Hibri, knows that these Buddhas had no faces. Richard McGuire a traveler who sojourned to Bamyan in the 70's records:

"Bamiyan was a different story. Set on a fertile plateau, this town is noted for its huge Buddha figures carved into the side of a cliff more than 1,500 years ago. The Buddhas were literally defaced by Muslim conquerors many years ago.."

["Journey Through Afghanistan", Richard McGuire, ©1999]



As can be seen clearly in the photograph above taken as early as the 70's, the Bamyan Buddhas had no face due to earlier Muslim rulers who were offended by the towering idols. A close look reveals ladders and scaffolding from international restoration efforts. To spend millions on restoring dead stone is highly offensive to a people who could use the money for feeding their children and improving their standards of living.

III. THE SHAR'I ARGUMENT

REGARDING THE SANCTITY OF IDOLS IN AN ISLAMIC STATE

Next, we see that Ms. Al-Hibri states:

"Khalifah Umar provides an excellent example. Upon entering Jerusalem, he prohibited the destruction of any Christian images or places of worship."

This is a very popular story, but seldom do people bother to investigate the details of this story. Kawkab `Ubayd writes in his book of Maaliki jurisprudence “Fiqh al-`Ibaadaat `ala al-Mathhab al-Maaliki”:

“When `Umar ibn al-Khaṭṭāb (رضي الله عنه) entered Syria, some Christians were preparing food for him. He said, ‘I will not enter your churches because of their statues’”.

This story is cited as evidence regarding the forbiddance to enter a place of worship where idols are placed. He goes on to mention the Hanafi position which likewise forbids it unless under utter necessity to investigate the nature of idolatry that is being conducted therein.

Imaam Shawkaani relates in his “*Neel al-Awṭar*”:

“Regarding the chapel and church, it has been related by Ibn Abi Shaybah in the *Musannaf* that Ibn Abbas detested prayer in a church which had images⁹, and this had been related regarding its offense from al-Hassan...”

As nice as this story is, the majority of evidence points to the fact that `Umar avoided entering the church because its idols were offensive to him and he refrained from being in or praying in the presence of their effigies of Christ. Imaam Shawkaani relates further in greater detail that this story is also recorded by Imaam Bukhaari by way of `Abdur-Razzaaq:

“When `Umar entered Syria some men were preparing a feast for him, and they were from their nobles. They said, ‘We would be honored if you would join us’. `Umar said to them, ‘We do not enter the churches due to the idols in it’, meaning the statues.”

Even if `Umar’s reason for not entering the Church was in some way to protect the structure, this is a completely inapplicable example in relation to the destruction of the Bamyān Buddhas. In the case of `Umar’s liberation of Syria, there existed peace and the Christians had accepted Muslim rule and were under the “*Aqd al-Thimmah*”¹⁰, thereby making them *Thimmi*¹¹ so long as they paid *Jizyah*¹². There exists not a single Buddhist in Afghanistan, thus there is no contract between the Islamic state of the Taliban and any Buddhist community. The statues were of no purpose in Afghanistan and thus the Afghans did with them as they willed, which was not in violation of their citizens’ religious sensitivities.

Had there been a Buddhist community who were paying the “*Jizyah*” tax and were under a contract of “*Ahl al-Thimma*” with their Muslim rulers, then violating their *private* places of worship would be forbidden by Shari’ah according to certain of the Jurisprudents. Some believe this extends only to the People of the Book (Christians, Jews and Sabaeans), whereas others believe this extends to

⁹ تصاویر – *Taṣāwīr* – In this context, anything fashioned by hand in the likeness of a living thing, whether it be statues, paintings, drawings or the like.

¹⁰ *Aqd al-Thimmah* – Contract of protection extended to the People of the Book under Islamic law. So long as they pay the due taxes, they are to be protected to the fullest extent by the Muslims and they are free to worship and their places of worship are to remain unscathed. See my “*Ahl al-Kitaab – An Analysis Based on the Qur’an and its Tafseer*”

¹¹ *Thimmi* – Protected Peoples. This is the classification of people who have accepted Muslim rule, pay their due taxes, and are protected under the contract of “*Thimma*”.

¹² *Jizyah* – The tax which the *Thimmi* pays under Islamic law for which they are to be protected to the fullest extent by the Islamic state.

all. Such is the case of the Hindus and Sikhs who live in Afghanistan and enjoy peace therein. There is one Jew left in Afghanistan who is a Rabbi maintaining the only Synagogue in all of Afghanistan.

Another Occidental Muslim named Fahmi Howeidi from Egypt says regarding his experience with the Taliban in Egypt:

“After eating, he wished to perform `Asr Prayer. I led him to my office and placed a prayer rug facing the Qibla as required. He looked around in the room and found some small bronze and wooden statues I collected from my trips to various African and Asian countries I visited. Said Mullah Abbas: "How can I pray in the midst of all these idols [asnaam]?" An expression of unease was obvious on his face. I replied that it has not occurred to me that these were idols. I do not have any veneration for these items nor do they incorporate a sense of sacredness in my mind. I deal with these items as hand-carvings and beautiful cultural and artistic expressions of nations and tribes I met in my travels...”

Here we have another untoward example of an individual is unaware of the Islamic legal position on this issue being very vocal in his criticism of the Taliban. Perhaps he has not read the following:

“Bukhari has mentioned that Ibn `Abbas would pray in a church *as long as there were no images in it...*”

[“Jaami` li-Ahkaam al-Qur’aan”, Imaam Qurtubi, *Tafseer Surat at-Tawbah* 9:107]

“Omar said..’Verily, *we will not enter your church because of its images...*ibn `Abbas would pray in a church *so long as it had no images*”

[*Neel al-Awṭaar*, Imaam Shawkaani, citing *Ṣaḥeeḥ al-Bukhaari*]

Mr. Howeidi states: “I do not know if it is necessary to tackle the position of Shariah on the demolition of statues, or whether this is licit or illicit in the view of holy law. It is a waste of time to delve into this matter.”

Sadly, in their attempts to vilify Islamic iconoclasm, they present arguments which fail to make even common sense. Ms. Al-Hibri states in her thesis defending idols:

"Muslim jurists also prohibited the destruction of places of worship and religious artifacts belonging to non-Muslims."

This blanket statement is false. Imaam Shawkaani states:

“It has been made evident regarding the permissibility of placing Mosques upon Churches, Chapels and the Idolatrous Temples, likewise many of the *Ṣaḥāba*¹³ did so upon the liberation of other nations. They rendered their places of worship into places of worship for the Muslim, and converting their cathedrals.”

[“*Neel al-Awṭaar*” Imaam Shawkaani]

¹³ *Ṣaḥāba* – The Prophet’s (صلى الله عليه وآله وسلم) Companions. May Allah be pleased with them.

Ms. Al-Hibri also makes a statement of appalling peculiarity:

"The Qur'an and Sunnah: Unlike the Bible, the Qur'an does not contain a single text that prohibits the making or possessing of 'pictures' or 'images'."

Unfortunately, this spirals even further downward into the bowels of absurdity. She is actually saying that the Qur'an and Sunnah are devoid of prohibition against "pictures" or "images". These arguments have already been addressed thoroughly using the Qur'an, Sunnah and their respective exegeses above. This will be addressed further in the next paragraph.

IV. THE SULAYMAAN (عليه السلام) ARGUMENT: DID HE LEGALIZE IDOLS?

Ms. Al-Hibri grossly misinterprets or misrepresents the Qur'an in the following statement:

"On the other hand, the Qur'an does describe God's exceptional grant of power to King Solomon which allowed him to order the Jinn (a form of invisible being) to make "arches, statues, basins as large as reservoirs, and cauldrons fixed (in their places)." (Qur'an 34:13)."

The verse she cites is "يَعْمَلُونَ لَهُ مَا يَشَاءُ مِنْ مَحَارِبَ وَتَمَاثِيلَ" meaning "and they worked for him as he wished making lofty-places and statues..."

The word "*tamaatheel*" in the Arabic language does not mean a statue of a living creature or idol specifically, and as an Arab Ms. Al-Hibri knows this well. This word "*tamaatheel*" literally means "likeness" which can be of anything including animate as well as inanimate objects. Some commentators of the Qur'an even postulated that these "*tamaatheel*" could have been of trees. Nonetheless, the laws of all Prophets before the Last (صلى الله عليه وآله وسلم) are obsolete and abrogated.

Imaam Qurtubi states in his "*Jaami` li-Ahkaam al-Qur'aan*" in regards to this verse:

"And He (Allah), the Exalted, has said: '*wa tamaatheel*' which is the plural of '*tamthaal*' and that is every image made in the likeness of animals, and other than animals. And it is said: It was from glass, copper, and alabaster embellished imagery, but it was not of animals..."

The Prophet (صلى الله عليه وآله وسلم) said, 'These were wrought upon the death of a righteous man upon whose grave they would raise a place of worship and an image like these images'... and this was the ruling for the permissibility of images in that time period, but that was abrogated by the law of Muhammad (صلى الله عليه وآله وسلم)."

Elsewhere in the same Tafseer, Imaam Qurtubi states. "It is asked, 'How can the (animate images) be permitted?' We say, 'That was permitted in their Law, but that is abrogated in our law..'"

Ms. Al-Hibri goes further in her grave misrepresentation of the traditional scholars of Tafseer without even citing a reference:

"Furthermore, in interpreting this Qur'anic passage, medieval scholars, such as Ibn Kathir, stated that King Solomon's throne was decorated with pictures as well as statues of birds and lions. In

fact, interpreters of these and other texts derived from them rules regarding the making and possessing of images. None of them derived a definitive prohibition.”

This is what Ibn Katheer’s Tafseer says about this specific verse:

“...and regarding the ‘*tamaatheel*’, so said ad-Dahaak and al-Siddy:

‘The *tamaatheel* are images (الصور)’. Mujaahid said, ‘They were made of brass’. Qataadah said, ‘They were made from clay and glass’..” Then the rest of the verse is explained.

So where is the ruling that producing and possessing images is permissible? The *opposite* is said. This is a suspicious mistake. The ruling regarding images of animate objects is clear in Islam.

Imaam Shawkaani reports from Imaam Nawawi:

“My companions and scholars besides them have stated: the forging of images of animals is a great enormity. Its enormity is amongst the *Kabaa’ir*¹⁴. It is of great menace and offense. Its manufacture is mentioned in the *Ahaadeeth*¹⁵, for its manufacture is *Haraam* in every context...”

["*Neel al-Awtaar*" of Imaam Shawkaani]

Why is it that everything Ms. Al-Hibri says about the Qur’an, Sunnah, and scholars is refuted by those very aforementioned elements? It is because she speaks from her whims and desires and has no knowledge of what she says.

V. THE DOLL ARGUMENT: “AISHA’S (رضي الله عنها) DOLLS MADE IDOLS ALLOWED”

“...A’ishah, the wife of the Prophet had dolls in her house and the Prophet never complained about them or asked her to destroy them. We know that one of them was a winged horse because it aroused his interest. A’ishah mentioned to the Prophet that King Solomon had a winged horse too (albeit a real one). The modern Egyptian jurist, Sheikh Rashid Ridha, commented on this hadith noting that some of the interpreters who take a strict view in the matter of images "distorted the words of the hadith" about A’ishah and her dolls.”

In regards to the Qur’anic verse 34:13, which we have previously covered thoroughly, Imaam al-Qurtubi starts his Tafseer of this verse saying:

“The Hadeeth of Sahl bin Haneef in which he stated:

The Messenger of Allah (صلى الله عليه وآله وسلم) cursed those who made images (المصورين)..”

Then he addresses the Hadeeth of Aisha (رضي الله عنها) playing with dolls:

“She (Aisha) stated: I used to play with dolls in the presence of the Prophet (صلى الله عليه وآله وسلم), and my girl-friends would also play with me. When the Messenger of Allah (صلى الله عليه وآله وسلم) would enter, they would hide themselves, but he (صلى الله عليه وآله وسلم) would call them out to play with me.’ This has been taken from (the collection of) Muslim. The scholars have said: And this

¹⁴ *Kabaa’ir* – pl. of *Kabeera* – Most severe classification of sins. Great sins.

¹⁵ *Ahaadeeth* – pl. of *Hadeeth* – Narrations of the Prophet (صلى الله عليه وآله وسلم) which were recorded by his faithful Companions.

was out of necessity, as this is a need for little girls and a training for them in the nurturing of their children...”

As is obvious, Imaam Qurtubi starts by declaring the utter impermissibility in Islam for forging images of animate objects, but designates the exception to the rule being children’s dolls which he considers a necessity (الضرورة).

Imaam Ibn Hajar al-Asqalaani, the most renowned commentator on Imaam Bukhaari’s collection of authentic *Hadeeth* gives a lucid exegesis to this issue. He states:

“This is used as an evidence regarding the permissibility of taking dolls for the term that a young girl plays with them. This is in exception to the general forbiddance of having images...”

Al-Bayhaqi states that after reaching puberty it is forbidden to have images, and this permission given to Aisha was before its forbiddance...

Al-Munthari states if there were statue like dolls it was before their forbiddance...”

Imaam Ibn Hajr further states in regards to the toy winged-horse that this was:

A non humanoid form

Having to do with a 4-year old girl who is not bound by any laws

Was an *abrogated* incident.

VI. THE “BUDDHIST ARE NOT IDOLATORS” ARGUMENT

Some Occidentalists Muslims have gone as far as to support the legitimacy of Buddhism as a monotheistic religion which is not guilty of idolatry. Ms. Al-Hibri states:

“It is worth noting at this point that Buddhists statues are not regarded by Buddhists as embodying the image of an objective divinity. For this reason, these statues are not idols; rather, they are objects of contemplation and reflection.”

The fact of the matter is that Buddhists do not believe in *any* specific object of divinity as they simply believe in planes of existence based on enlightenment. The highest state of their enlightenment is “Nirvana”. Buddhists, while believing in the perpetuity of the universe, deny the existence of any Divine Creator.

“Buddhism declares that everything has been brought about by causes, that there is no permanent substratum of existence. There is general agreement that the only true method of explaining any existing thing is to trace one cause back to the next, without the desire or need to explain the ultimate cause of all things. *For Buddhism there is no divine creator...*”

[Encyclopedia Britannica, volume 3, page 425]

However, they do worship their idols without declaring them creators of the universe (a figure whom they reject in the first place). In Islam the act of “*ibaadah*”¹⁶ is in action and not just in dogma. The Encyclopedia further states about Buddhism:

¹⁶ *ibaadah* – worship; any act of obeisance which attributes absolute majesty to the object of veneration.

“Image Worship. The Theravada Pali canon enjoins three objects of reverence for Buddhists: relics of the Buddha’s person, generally enshrined in the stupa; relics of belongings such as his alms bowl; and *images of his likeness*. Worship (puja) consists of presenting offerings of flowers, incense and light, of *bowing down*, and (in the case of stupas) of *circumambulation*.” [Encyclopedia Britannica, volume 3, page 396]

VII. CONCLUSION

We now live in a day and age where Muslims are in the forefront defending idols while they are silent at the horrors wrought against their brethren in Palestine, Afghanistan, Kashmir, Chechnya, the Balkans, and elsewhere. These Muslims denounce the Taliban for defiantly and bravely destroying two Buddhists statues in their country, a country which has not Buddhists, and a country which many scholars have declared the most sincere attempt at Shari’ah on the planet. However, these voices of condemnation coming the Muslims do not speak a word about Afghanistan’s starving population who are ignored by the entire world except for by those leaders who would brutalize them further with sanctions. Where are Aziza al-Hibiri’s words against the sanctions which are beleaguering the starving population of Afghanistan? Where is Muzammil Siddiqui’s¹⁷ protest against the sanctions against the starving population of Afghanistan?

The Prophet (صلى الله عليه وآله وسلم) said, “The Hour will not be established until the women of *ad-Daws*¹⁸ shake their hips around *Thi-l Khalaasa*¹⁹” [Bukhari, Muslim, Ahmad, al-Haakim, and others]. The tribe of *ad-Daws* is a tribe of Muslims in the Arabian Peninsula and *Thi-l Khalaasa* was an idol from the period of *al-Jaahiliyah*²⁰. Only five years ago I thought that Muslims walking around an idol in any kind of adulation must have been something in the far and distant future. However, today the Muslim leaders, and even some scholars²¹, are defending statues and idols as “artifacts” that should not be destroyed. It is but tomorrow that some circumambulate idols on display in museums, temples, and other places in awe. May Allah save us from that day.

¹⁷ Muzammil Siddiqui later retracted his condemnation stating he made the statement in absence of proper information regarding the reality of the situation in Afghanistan. However, this retraction was very quiet and private in sharp contrast to his very public and vocal condemnation.

¹⁸ In some narrations “*nisaa’ ad-Daws*” (women of *ad-Daws*) and others simply say “*ad-Daws*”.

¹⁹ *Thi-l Khalaasa* – See *Fath al-Baari* by Imam ibn Hajar al-Asqalaani. He defines this as follows, “This was an idol from the period of ignorance (before Islam)” [*Fath al-Baari*].

²⁰ *al-Jaahiliyah* – Period of ignorance before Islam when the Arabs used to worship idols and adhere to loose moral code.

²¹ Yusuf al-Qaradawi initially condemned the act of the Taliban by saying the Buddhas were artifacts like the Sphinx which was never destroyed (an idea refuted in this article). He went to Afghanistan in order to advise the Taliban against destroying idols and other policies. He returned an advocate and supporter of the Taliban saying “Hearing is not like seeing” (meaning hearsay is nothing compared to personally verifying the reality by sight). Aziza al-Hibri and others like her are not scholars of Islam in any context.